

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Citizen Schools, Inc.

Application ID: 13ES147020

Program Name: Citizen Schools Massachusetts

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

(+) The applicant persuasively describes the need for intervention within the Boston Public School System. That description includes empirical data on the percentage of low income families (70%), the percentage of students designated as special education students (19%), and the percentage of students with limited English language proficiency (approximately one-third).

(+) The applicant clearly explained why the middle school target population was selected. Research was cited to support that interventions provided at this critical point can take the students to the paths of success and deter them from becoming eventual dropouts.

(+) The applicant adequately provides evidence of the severity of the need to increase academic success of students in the Boston area. Specific data are given for Boston Public Schools' 8th grade students having major deficits in math/English language arts as measured on statewide testing.

(+) The applicant presents clear details of what the AmeriCorps members will do at the three school sites in the after-school component for the participating middle school student population. A succinct six-point plan gives a comprehensive description of proposed activities, such as teaching math and literacy skills for an entire year to a team of 15-18 program students in an extended school day program, which shows a well-planned scope of activities.

(+) The applicant clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the AmeriCorps members. The specific activities will fall into six areas: forging deep consistent relationships, teaching academic skills, recruiting and supporting volunteers, increasing college readiness, engaging families of the students, and supporting programs and school priorities.

(+) Appropriate explanation is offered for how the applicant determined the performance targets for students' completion of the full year-long program and showing math/English academic growth to the level of proficient or advanced or attaining a Student Growth Percentile score of 60 or above.

- (+) The applicant demonstrates that the proposed interventions are evidence-based and documents the results of a longitudinal match study which found that students who participated in the program outperformed their peers on attendance, achievement, and high school graduation rates.
- (+) The applicant documents from its own experience the impact this kind of intervention is already having in the target community. Although within a somewhat small group of students, prior intervention is linked to improved student performance as well as increased parent participation.
- (-) Incomplete needs data are presented to provide convincing evidence for the selected population to be served at Joseph Lee School. No economic level or academic performance data are evident for the current sixth grade students who are part of the target population for this project.
- (-) The applicant did not provide comparative data that would provide context for the need of the target community/sites.
- (-) The proposal was weakened by the lack of identification of sources of information about the target population.
- (-) The applicant does not clearly explain why existing staff could not accomplish some of the tasks for which AmeriCorps members are sought.
- (-) The applicant does not present clear details for half of each Member's assignment.
- (-) This application does not clearly identify the metrics that will have predictive value on long-term educational and career outcome.
- (-) The applicant does not clearly demonstrate measurable evidence of the program's success in the Boston Public Schools to indicate a measurable community impact and/or solving of the proposed problem.
- (-) The applicant does not provide complete details of the evidence-based study in the 2010 Policy Studies Associates research to show linkage of the proposed intervention activities and research-based activities. Lack of specifics such as the number of students and direct correlation of types of activities of those students as compared to the students in the proposed AmeriCorps program weakened the evidence base.